

(f) *OUTRAM, OTAGO*

While walking along a gravel beach on the Taieri River near Outram at 7.30 p.m. on 21 December 1966 one of my dogs flushed a dotterel-like bird which flew round and landed some 70-80 yards further along the beach. It appeared brownish on the upper parts with white throat and a prominent black Y-shaped band on the breast, and with a black forehead. I contacted Mrs J. B. Hamel and she suggested that it might be a Black-fronted Dotterel.

I saw presumably the same bird again at 4 p.m. on 23 December on the same beach. It was feeding along the edge of the water and on viewing it through binoculars I could see in addition to the previous markings observed that there was a white line passing just above the eye and continuing round the back of the head. Also it had a bright red beak with black tip and a red ring round the eye. With the description given in the Field Guide it was possible to confirm that it was a Black-fronted Dotterel. It was on the beach again at 5 p.m. on 27 December. No further sightings were made in 1966. The beach is some 160 by 60 yards in area and situated approximately one mile downstream from the Outram Bridge (Map reference, NZMS 1, Sheet S163 - 930726).

On 26 November 1970 I noticed a Black-fronted Dotterel on the same beach and my wife and I observed it from 4 p.m. to 4.45 p.m. That same evening Mr P. Schweigman came out from Dunedin and we watched it for about half an hour. It was also observed on nine days between 28 November 1970 and 15 January 1971.

All the sightings were on the same beach, except for the last when the bird appeared on a gravel beach about a quarter of a mile upstream from the beach of the previous sightings. On this occasion it landed on the gravel beach and after a few minutes it flew to the opposite side of the river and began feeding on muddy ground at the edge of the water.

The beach where the bird was seen most often was inspected at least once a day from 26 November 1970 to 11 January 1971. After that date it was inspected frequently but not every day. Since 15 January there have been no further sightings up till the present time, 11 May 1971.

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SEX AND AGE OF THE ONLY SPECIMEN OF THE  
DARTER *Anhinga rufa* (DAUDIN)  
RECORDED FROM NEW ZEALAND

The only record of a Darter, *Anhinga rufa* (Daudin), in New Zealand is that of a skin which was found nailed to the wall of a shed at Hokitika, South Westland, in January by F. R. Fuller. Buller (1875), when reporting the find, gave a detailed description of the skin and thought that it was either an adult female or an immature of either sex. The skin is in the Canterbury Museum (AV 14,971). It has the following plumage characteristics which indicate that it is that of an adult female. There are long, thin,

ornamental plumes on the wings which only occur in adults. The foreneck, breast and abdomen are buffy white as in females and immatures, and not black or dark brown as in adult males. The white stripes on the sides of the neck have distinct broad dark borders, which were black according to Buller but now somewhat faded. The borders are complete on the dorsal and incomplete on the ventral sides. The white stripes lack distinct dark borders in immatures (van Tets 1970: 206, pl. 12).

Normally it is immature and not adult birds which stray as vagrants far beyond their usual range. It is conceivable that the darter was caught by a cyclone and transported to New Zealand from Australia or New Caledonia. Darters use columns of rising hot air to glide and soar from one place to another. They ascend several thousand feet in contrast to shags and cormorants which rarely fly higher than a thousand feet above ground or water level.

#### REFERENCES

- BULLER, W. L. 1875. On the occurrence of *Plotus novae-hollandiae* in New Zealand. Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute 7: 217-218.  
 VAN TETS, G. F. 197. Pelecaniformes. Pp. 202-213 in: SLATER, P. et al. A field guide to Australian birds. Non-Passerines. Pp. xxxii + 1-428, text illus., pls. 1-64, 396 maps. Adelaide, &c.: Rigby Limited.

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#### WHITE-FACED HERONS IN DUNEDIN

In mid-November while driving to work at about 8.30 a.m. I noticed a White-faced Heron (*Ardea novaehollandiae*) launching itself into flight from the roof of a large two storied house situated 100yds. from the main street of Dunedin. This was a new experience for me and while discussing the sighting was told that several reports of the species within city limits have been made.

White Herons (*Egretta alba*) have long been known to capitalise on the availability of an easy meal from a suburban goldfish pond. This seemed to me to be the best explanation of the presence of the White-faced Heron within city limits.

The following week I observed a White-faced Heron flying in its distinctive landing attitude with legs lowered and obviously preparing to land beside a goldfish pond I knew to exist. This incident took place at 400ft. altitude in typical suburban surroundings at 8.10 a.m. The bird, having selected and obtained his fish by the time I arrived on the scene, flew to the roof of a neighbouring house, paused for a few seconds, then flew off still carrying his victim.

Records kept by Mrs J. Hamel show that in 1967 a White-faced Heron was seen to catch a goldfish and another to stand watching goldfish through a wire netting cover. Both were within city limits.

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